

February 2, 2017

The Honorable Deb Fischer
United States Senate
454 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Fischer:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my position on federal education mandates regarding private school vouchers and the importance of protecting the rights of students with disabilities and ensuring that they get the quality education they deserve.

Federal Mandates Regarding Private School Vouchers

As a strong proponent of local control, I believe a decision to provide vouchers, scholarships or other public support for students who choose to attend a nonpublic school should not be mandated by the federal government. Rather, this is a state and school district matter. Therefore, if confirmed, I will not impose a school choice program on any state or school district.

The Every Student Succeeds Act made great strides in returning control over education decisions to states and local communities. Decisions about whether to provide parental choice will vary from state to state and district to district, reflecting local needs and I will be respectful of state and local decisions on this issue.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

I believe that all students, including individuals with disabilities, deserve an equal opportunity to lead full, productive and successful lives. I am committed to enforcing all federal laws to protect the hard won rights of students with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, commonly called IDEA, includes many essential elements to protect the rights of students with disabilities to gain access to, and succeed in, a high quality education. To that end, if confirmed, I am committed to leading the Department of Education in support of the remarkable parents and educators who make this vision a reality for students with disabilities in states and communities across our great nation. IDEA requires a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment for all students with disabilities.

The Honorable Deb Fischer, page two

At the federal level, we need to continue to guide and monitor compliance while providing states with the tools they need to help districts, schools and other stakeholders to be successful. We must also encourage states to work with parents and districts to create more effective Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that are useful for increasing learning gains for students with disabilities. These students are accomplishing great things in states and districts that recognize their uniqueness. We can shine a light on their successes so that others know what is possible. If confirmed as Secretary, I will make it a priority to highlight what works best for students with disabilities.

Senator Fischer, I look forward to working with you to support Nebraska's teachers, schools and districts as they work to provide a high quality education to every student.

Sincerely,



Betsy DeVos